

NORTH CAROLINA

DIVISION

OF

VETERANS AFFAIRS

POLICY MANUAL

SECTION I – CUSTOMER SERVICE

- 1.01 Customer Service
- 1.02 Response to Telephone Calls and Correspondence
- 1.03 Accepting Gifts
- 1.04 Expectations of State Service Officers

SECTION II – CLAIMS AND APPEALS

- 2.01 Timely Submittal of Claims
- 2.02 Direct Submission by County Veterans Service Offices
- 2.03 Appeals
- 2.04 Revocation of Powers of Attorney

SECTION III – TRAINING AND ACCREDITATION

- 3.01 Train and Assist Veteran Service Officers
- 3.02 Accreditation of Veteran Service Officers

SECTION IV – PERSONNEL POLICIES

- 4.01 Flexible Work Options
- 4.02 Supervisors BEACON Responsibilities
- 4.03 BEACON Entries by Positive Time Employees
- 4.04 Probationary Period for New Hires

SECTION V – MISCELLANEOUS

- 5.01 Timely Submission of Reports, Bills, Requests, etc.
- 5.02 Media and Legislative Contacts
- 5.03 Pending Claims and Disclosure to the Public

- 5.04 Deadline for Submission of NC Scholarship for
Children of Wartime Veterans
- 5.05 Admission to State Veterans Homes
- 5.06 Internment in State Veterans Cemetery
- 5.07 Placement of Urns in a Columbarium
- 5.08 Placement of Objects at State Veterans Cemeteries
- 5.09 Flower Fund

Section I

Customer Service Policies

- 1.01 Customer Service
- 1.02 Response to Telephone Calls and Correspondence
- 1.03 Accepting Gifts
- 1.04 Expectations of State Service Officers

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Customer Service

Policy Number: 1.01

Effective Date: 2/1/2012

Revised/Reviewed:

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Purpose:

To establish a policy regarding customer service.

Policy Statement:

1. Service is our only product and the only thing we can offer is service.
2. The Veteran/claimant deserves the opportunity to be heard. The role of the North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs (NCDVA) is to present the Veteran/claimant's side of the issue.
3. All Veterans need to believe that we will do everything possible to assist them in receiving benefits – that is the reason for our existence. They must never feel that we resent them or feel that assisting them is an imposition.
4. Veterans must receive, and believe that they are receiving, the most technically proficient representation possible. We owe it to the Veterans we serve to thoroughly research the law and regulations to prepare the strongest claim possible.
5. The Veterans we serve deserve timely responses. If you do not have a full answer, contact the Veteran to let her know that we are working on her issue. Regular contact will prevent a lot of dissatisfaction. Let the Veteran know when to expect an answer or resolution. Follow-up regularly with the Veteran to inform her of progress on the issue.

Core Values

6. The National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) and the NCDVA have endorsed and adopted the Core Values of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (US DVA). These Core Values reflect that the NCDVA is an integral part of the delivery of care to North Carolina's military veterans. These Core Values also reflect the commonality and partnership of the shared mission, responsibilities and goals of both the NCDVA and US DVA. The Core Values define who we are, our culture and how we care for

Veterans, their families and other beneficiaries. Our Core Values are **Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence (I CARE)**.

- a. **Integrity.** Act with high moral principle. Adhere to the highest professional standards. Maintain the trust and confidence of all with whom you engage.
- b. **Commitment.** Work diligently to serve Veterans and their beneficiaries. Be driven by an earnest belief in the mission of the NCDVA and the US DVA. Fulfill your individual responsibilities and your organizational responsibilities.
- c. **Advocacy.** Be truly Veteran-centric by identifying, fully considering and appropriately advancing the interests of Veterans and other beneficiaries.
- d. **Respect.** Treat all those you serve and with whom you work with dignity and respect. Show respect to earn it.
- e. **Excellence.** Strive to the highest quality and continuous improvement. Be thoughtful and decisive in leadership, accountable for your actions, willing to admit mistakes and rigorous in correcting them.

Dissatisfied Customers

- 7. When a Veteran or family member is upset or displeased, use **AUTO-DF** to address the concern.
 - a. **Apologize.** On behalf of the NCDVA and to the Veteran for the inconvenience. Sometimes employees find it difficult to apologize for a problem he or she did not cause or feel responsible for. Remember: you are not taking blame for the problem but acknowledging the Veteran's feeling about the service failure and apologizing that he has had this problem.
 - b. **Understand the problem.** In order to understand the problem you must be able to listen closely and in a non-judgmental manner. Don't become defensive. Be polite, honest and show concern and empathy for the Veteran and the situation. Be sure to ask who, what, when, where and how questions to obtain specific details about the issue.
 - c. **Thank the Veteran for the feedback.** Thank the Veteran for making the complaint and for giving us an opportunity to make improvements.
 - d. **Offer solutions and take action.** If known, explain the reason for the failure. Offer options and create solutions. Provide a quick, on the spot solution whenever possible.
 - e. **Document.** Document the issue and the resolution.

f. **Follow-up.** If the issue was not resolved immediately, the Veteran should be contacted again to inform her of the outcome of her concern and determine if the resolution satisfactorily addressed her concern. **If the problem is systemic, notify the Assistant Secretary's Office.**

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Response to Telephone Calls and Correspondence **Policy Number: 1.02**

Effective Date: 01/01/2003

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Purpose:

To establish guidelines for answering NCDVA telephones and timeliness of responses.

Policy Statement:

All NCDVA employees are responsible for responding promptly to telephone calls and correspondence. This includes inquiries from Veterans, County Veteran Service Offices, other NCDVA offices and other government agencies.

NOTE: Requests or contacts from news media or legislative offices shall be referred to the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs or the NCDVA Assistant Director.

Telephone Coverage:

All telephones shall be covered from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M on regular work days.

Responses:

1. Telephone calls will be returned no later than the next business day. Ideally telephone calls will be returned the day of the call.
2. Letters and emails will be responded to within three working days. If an answer cannot be provided within that time, send an acknowledgement explaining that the letter or email has been received and a response will be forthcoming as soon as possible.
3. All NCDVA office managers shall ensure that someone in the office is designated to respond to calls and correspondence for any employee who will be out of the office for more than one business day.

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Accepting Gifts

Policy Number: 1.03

Effective Date: 07/01/2011

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Purpose:

To establish a policy regarding NCDVA employees accepting gifts from Veterans, Veteran's family members, or vendors.

Policy Statement:

1. No NCDVA employee may receive any benefit either directly or indirectly from any Veteran, Veteran's family members, or vendors of any type for services rendered or information provided. These benefits include but are not limited to any rebate, gift or otherwise, money or anything of value whatsoever or an obligation, or contract for future reward or compensation from any person, or vendor.
2. If a Veteran or family member brings NCDVA staff food and/or gift baskets, NCDVA employees may consume such items as long as the food items are placed in a public location accessible by agency employees and visitors.
3. NCDVA employees may not accept gifts from vendors.
4. A violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal and/or criminal charges.

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Expectations of State Service Officers

Policy Number: 1.04

Effective Date: 06/27/2008

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Purpose:

To establish a policy outlining expectations for all State Service Officers.

Policy Statement:

1. State Service Officers (SSO) will provide information and guidance to field requests from a number of sources. State Service Officers are expected to respond to field requests in a professional manner regardless of who presents the request. This includes Processing Assistants and Service Officers, based in both County Veterans Service Offices and NCDVA Offices.
2. When the request is from a Service Officer in the field (away from his or her District Office), an interim response will be provided within three hours. This response will acknowledge the request and, if a complete answer cannot be provided at that time, advise the Service Officer when a fuller response can be provided.
3. When the request is from any other party, including Service Officers in their primary office, a response should be provided within 3 business days. If the SSO cannot provide a complete response within 3 business days, the SSO will provide whatever information he/she has obtained and advise the requester when a more complete answer may be available.
4. When the request is directly from a Veteran/claimant, the Service Officer may refer the requester back to his/her local Service Office, if appropriate.
5. State Service Officers shall keep field offices informed of current developments and policies at the VA Regional Office.
6. When representing a Veteran/claimant at a hearing the State Service Officer must insure that the Veteran/client believes that he has had case presented fully and professionally. The Veteran/claimant deserves the opportunity to be heard. The role of NCDVA is to present the Veteran/claimant's side of the issue.

7. If a Veteran/claimant arrives at the State Service Office without an appointment, he will be seen as expeditiously as possible. If no Service Officer is available to assist at that time, a Service Officer should briefly greet the Veteran/claimant and explain when someone will be available to render assistance. Whenever possible this should be within an hour. Once assistance has been given, the Veteran/claimant should be referred back to the appropriate field office. The field office will be informed of the Veteran/claimant's visit, the issues presented and what action or guidance the State Service Office provided.

8. Provide constructive feedback to district and county service officers. State Service Officers.

Section II

Claims and Appeals Policies

- 2.01 Timely Submittal of Claims
- 2.02 Direct Submission by County Veterans Service Offices
- 2.03 Appeals
- 2.04 Revocation of Powers of Attorney

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Informal Claims

Policy Number: 2.01

Effective Date: 06/01/2009

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Purpose:

To establish a policy for timely filing of claims that will preserve the date of award at the earliest possible time.

Policy Statement:

1. NCDVA Veterans Service Officers will strive to ensure Veterans, or Veteran's family member's, claims are submitted in a timely manner that will preserve the earliest award date possible. To ensure a claim is not held up while awaiting additional information or documentation, each Veterans Service Officer will submit an informal claim for a Veteran when failure to do so would jeopardize that Veteran's date of award for the month in question.
2. District Offices shall submit an Informal Claim for Veterans Benefits when failure to do so would result in a specific claim not being entered into the VA benefits processing by the last working day of the month in which the claim is being submitted.
3. Informal Claims shall be submitted to the State Service Office on the NC Division of Veterans Affairs Informal Claim Form (April 2009) to arrive no later than 3:00 p.m. of the last business day of the month.

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Direct submission by County Veteran Service Offices

Policy Number: 2.02

Effective Date: 01/01/2010

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Purpose:

To establish a policy delineating when County Veterans Service Offices may submit compensation and pension claims directly to the State Service Officer

Policy:

1. When possible, County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs) that are accredited by NCDVA will submit compensation and pension claims and related documents directly to the State Service Office (SSO).
2. The senior District Service Officer of the district in which the County is located shall recommend CVSOs she believes are ready to submit claims directly to the SSO to the NCDVA Assistant Director. The NCDVA Assistant Director shall determine which CVSOs are approved to submit claims directly to the SSO.
3. A CVSO may self-refer to the Assistant Director for approval to submit claims directly to the SSO.
4. Upon approval by the Assistant Director, NCDVA, the CVSO may submit claims directly to the SSO.
5. The CVSO may always request assistance and/or review by the NCDVA District Office prior to submission when the CVSO believes it would be in the best interest of the Veteran.

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Appeals

Policy Number: 2.03

Effective Date: 2/1/2012

Revised/Reviewed:

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Purpose:

To establish NCDVA policy on involvement by NCDVA on appeals originating at a County Veteran Service Office.

Policy Statement:

1. An appeal begins when the Notice of Disagreement is submitted on behalf of the claimant.
2. Any accredited County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO) may initiate the appeals process independently or in consultation with the NCDVA District Service Officer (DSO) and/or State Service Officer (SSO).
3. Any CVSO that is not accredited to represent Veterans before the Department of Veterans Affairs must consult with the NCDVA DSO prior to initiating the Notice of Disagreement/appeal. If a non-accredited CVSO initiates or assists the claimant in initiating the Notice of Disagreement/appeal, this action will constitute choosing option 4a. below (election to forgo NCDVA assistance with the appeals process).
4. The CVSO has two options:
 - a. The CVSO and claimant may elect to forgo NCDVA assistance with the appeals process, or
 - b. The CVSO and claimant may elect to use NCDVA's assistance with the appeals process.
5. If the CVSO and claimant elect to forgo NCDVA assistance in the appeals process:
 - a. A new Power of Attorney (POA) will be executed in favor of any entity other than NCDVA that has agreed to accept such POA.
 - b. NCDVA will then cease all participation in the claimant's appeal.
 - c. NCDVA remains available to assist the claimant on any other appropriate matters not related to the issues on appeal. Appropriate matters are any that NCDVA would assist other claimants with that do not require a POA.

6. If the CVSO and claimant elect to use NCDVA's assistance with the appeals process, the CVSO will notify the DSO/SSO of the appeal and the issues to be considered.
7. The CVSO and claimant will consult with the DSO/SSO to decide the best course of action. At a minimum, the CVSO must be an active participant throughout the appeals process, available to coordinate with the claimant in the development and prosecution of the appeal.
8. If the claimant and CVSO in consultation with the DSO/SSO determine that the best course of action is to re-open the claim, no modification to the POA is necessary.
9. If the claimant and CVSO in consultation with the DSO/SSO determine that the best course of action is to request an in-person hearing before the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA) in Washington, DC, a new POA in favor of the American Legion will be executed. Block 13 of this POA will authorize release of information to NCDVA and the CVSO.
10. CVSO may attend any hearing as a witness, support for the claimant or to assist the NCDVA SSO.

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Revocation of Powers of Attorney

Policy Number: 2.04

Effective Date: 11/15/1996

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Policy:

The North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs (NCDVA) will only revoke a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Form 21-22 (Appointment of Veterans Service Organization As Claimant's Representative, commonly referred to as Power of Attorney (POA) in extreme circumstances. Only the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs may revoke an NCDVA Power of Attorney.

Policy Statement:

1. Revocation of North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Power of Attorney (POA):

a. Withdrawing from representation of a claimant before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is a serious action. Advocacy on behalf of North Carolina Veterans is a core function of the NCDVA. This action shall only be taken as a last resort when continuing representation will adversely affect NCDVA. For this reason, only the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs may make the decision to revoke an NCDVA or joint NCDVA/American Legion (AL) POA. This decision may not be delegated below the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs. In extreme circumstances where time is of the essence and the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs is not available, the Assistant Director may provisionally revoke the POA pending confirmation by the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs. The Assistant Director may not further delegate this authority.

b. The Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the DSO and/or CVSO, and the State Service Officer may revoke the NCDVA POA for the reasons listed below. In the case of a joint NCDVA/American Legion POA, the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs will also consult with the American Legion Department Service Officer.

- (1) If the claimant presents false or tampered evidence.
- (2) If the claimant insists that NCDVA or County Service office assist him or her in perpetrating a fraudulent claim.
- (3) If the claimant requests revocation of the POA.
- (4) If the claimant no longer resides in North Carolina AND the claim is being adjudicated outside of North Carolina

- (5) If the claimant communicates threats against NCDVA and/or county service office staff or toward others while in an NCDVA or county service office.
 - (6) If the claimant attempts physical violence against NCDVA and/or county service office staff or toward others while in an NCDVA or county service office.
 - (7) Conflict of interest.
 - (8) Other instances where the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs determines that further representation of the claimant will adversely affect NCDVA.
- a. If a service officer believes that revocation of the POA is appropriate, he/she will document the circumstances and forward the recommendation to the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs. Except in the case of physical violence, the recommendation must include documentation of efforts made at the local level to resolve the issue(s). The Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs may contact the service officer and/or the claimant to obtain further information. If the POA is a joint NCDVA/American Legion POA, the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs will consult with the Department Service Officer. If the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs determines that revocation is necessary, he will issue a letter of revocation to the VA Regional Office or Board of Veterans Appeals. Copies will be sent to the claimant, CVSO, NCDVA DSO, NCDVA State Service Officer and, if is a joint NCDVA/AL POA, the American Legion Department Service Officer. In the case of a provisional revocation pending confirmation by the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs, the letter of revocation will clearly indicate that the revocation is provisional, that the NCDVA is suspending representation pending confirmation by the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs. If the provisional revocation is not confirmed by the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs, representation will resume when that decision is made.

2. In the case of a joint NCDVA/AL POA, if one entity elects to revoke the POA, the other entity may elect to continue representation under a single entity POA.

Section III

Training and Accreditation Policies

- 3.01 Train and Assist Veteran Service Officers
- 3.02 Accreditation of Veteran Service Officers

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Train and Assist Veteran Service Officers

Policy Number: 3.01

Effective Date: 08/06/2008

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Policy:

The North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs will train, assist and provide guidance to the employees of NCDVA and any county, city, town, or Indian tribe who are engaged in Veterans services.

Policy Statement:

INITIAL TRAINING

1. Initial Contact with new County Veteran Service Officers (CVSO).
 - a. The District Service Officer (DSO) responsible for the county or other entity shall notify the Training Coordinator as soon as he/she hears of a vacancy at a county, city, town or Indian Tribe Veterans Service Office. For purposes of this policy, a service officer at any of these local entities will be referred to as a County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO).
 - b. The DSO and/or the Assistant Director will contact the County Manager (or designated representative of the local entity) and provide:
 - i. An overview of the duties and responsibilities of a CVSO,
 - ii. the required training to meet the standards required by CFR §14.629 for accreditation by the Office of General Counsel to represent Veterans before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs,
 - iii. an overview of the NCDVA training available to meet the requirements for initial accreditation and to maintain accreditation, and
 - iv. an offer to assist in the selection process if the County Manager desires.

- c. Upon selection by the county, the DSO shall furnish the NCDVA Training Coordinator the name, phone number, date of hire, office address, mailing address, fax number, and email address of the CVSO. The DSO will complete the required form for new hires and send to the NCDVA Training Coordinator. (Appendix 1 – County Service Officer).

1. Phase I: DSO Orientation of new Service Officers.

- a. During orientation the DSO shall :
- i. Provide and review the NCDVA SOP
 - ii. Provide and review NCDVA Training Manual
 - iii. Provide and review NCDVA Resource Manual
 - iv. Provide and review NCDVA Directory
 - v. Provide information regarding District Office services and explain the affiliation between NCDVA and supported counties.

b. If circumstances require, this orientation may be conducted after Initial Training.

2. Phase II: Initial Training

a. Initial Training of a Service Officer will be completed within thirty days of hire.

b. Initial training will be conducted Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of the second week of each month, in the Offices of the Assistant Secretary in Raleigh.

c. This training will include modules 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10 of the NCDVA Training Manual. These modules are compensation, pension, and medical benefits.

d. The DSO will contact the NCDVA Training Coordinator to schedule this training.

3. Phase III: On-line training and mentoring.

a. Upon completion of Phase II, the responsible DSO shall begin Phase III.

b. Phase III will continue until the trainee has a minimum of six months experience as a service officer. The Assistant director may approve credit for previous experience toward the six months requirement.

c. Phase III will be conducted a minimum of one day per week and must consist of six hours per week. A minimum of three hours will be on-the-job training (OJT) and/or mentoring by the DSO.

d. During Phase III, weekly on-line training will be conducted to cover the remaining modules of the NCDVA Training Manual. DSO and CVSO will coordinate with

the NCDVA Training Coordinator to make arrangements to participate in the on-line training. The on-line training is scheduled on Thursdays, from 9:00 am – 10:00 am. The DSO should be present during on-line training.

e. The NCDVA training manual, latest edition shall be used for all training.

f. The DSO shall insure the Module Checklist is initiated and completed. After training is complete, the Module Checklist will be forwarded to the Training Coordinator. (Appendix 2 - Module Checklist).

4. Phase IV: Testing.

a. Prior to testing, a Service Officer must have successfully completed Phase III, to include completion of all modules and a minimum of six months experience. Previous experience as a service officer may be credited toward the six months requirement.

b. The DSO, NCDVA Training Coordinator and Assistant Director shall coordinate and determine if the Service Officer is ready to test.

c. If the Service Officer is ready to test, the NCDVA Training Coordinator will schedule a proctor, test site, and date for test to be completed.

d. Testing procedures:

i. The test will consist of 100 multiple-choice questions based on material presented in the training modules.

ii. The candidate will have two hours to complete the test.

iii. Passing score is 75% .

iv. If the candidate fails the test, he/she may be retested a maximum of two additional times.

v. There will be a minimum of 90 days between tests.

vi. If a candidate fails the test three times, he/she is ineligible for NCDVA accreditation.

e. Inaccurate, misleading or unclear questions.

i. If a candidate believes a question is unclear or inaccurate, he/she may challenge the question.

ii. If the candidate challenges the question, the proctor will review the question.

iii. If the proctor believes that the question is imprecise, inaccurate or misleading, the proctor may orally examine the candidate on the issue tested by the question. If the candidate exhibits adequate knowledge of the issue, the proctor may give the candidate credit for that question.

iv. The candidate may challenge no more than three questions per test.

f. Proctors.

- i. The Assistant Director, NCDVA shall designate three proctors.
- ii. Each proctor must be an accredited service officer who is employed by NCDVA.
- iii. The Assistant Director will appoint one proctor each from:
 - 1. The Coastal Region (Districts 1-4, 13, 15, Fayetteville State Veterans Home and Kinston State Veterans Home),
 - 2. The Piedmont Region (Districts 5-9, Salisbury State Veterans Home, the Assistant Secretary's Office and the State Service Office) and
 - 3. The Mountain Region (Districts 10 -12 and Black Mountain State Veterans Home).

g. Testing locations:

- i. Tests will be scheduled at a location no more than two hours travel time by the CVSO and that does not require the CVSO to remain overnight.
- ii. If the CVSO does not have funds to travel, the DSO will transport the CVSO to the testing location.

h. If the Service Officer does not obtain a passing score, the proctor will notify the NCDVA Training Coordinator and Assistant Director. The DSO, Training Coordinator, Assistant Director and Service Officer will develop a remedial training plan. If the Service Officer is employed by a county, city, town or Indian tribe, the Assistant Director will notify the DSO and immediate supervisor in writing that the Service Officer failed the test

i. If the Service Officer obtains a passing score, works 1000 hours or more per year in accordance with the requirements of CFR § 14.629, and desires accreditation with NCDVA, the proctor will:

- i. Issue and review NCDVA Policy Manual. The Service Officer will sign and date the acknowledgement of receipt and intent to abide by NCDVA Policies. The proctor shall mail the signed original acknowledgement to the Assistant Director.
- ii. Complete the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Training, Response, Involvement and Preparation of Claims (VA TRIP) training information sheet and fax to Training Coordinator for enrollment into the online VA TRIP Program.
- iii. The proctor shall forward the test and results to the Training Coordinator. The Training Coordinator shall notify the District Officer and immediate supervisor in writing that Service Officer passed the test.
- iv. Submit two copies of VA Form 21 (Application for Accreditation as Service Organization Representative) to the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs.
 - 1. Enter North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs (NCDVA) in block 7A of one VA Form 21.
 - 2. Enter American Legion (AL) in block 7A of the other VA Form 21.

j. Upon notification that the Service Officer passed the test, works the necessary hours required by CFR § 14.629 and desires accreditation with NCDVA, the DSO shall either:

i. Submit a memo to the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs recommending accreditation or

ii. Submit a memo to the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs explaining why the DSO does not recommend accreditation and recommending remedial measures to correct deficiencies.

k. The Training Coordinator shall furnish the Assistant Director the name of trainee, employer, and date of successful completion of test in order to prepare a certification of completion.

l. After the Service Officer has received the Letter of Accreditation from US DVA Office of the General Counsel (OGC) and has successfully completed VA TRIP training, he or she should contact the NCDVA Network Administrator to begin the application process for US DVA Virtual Private Network (VPN) computer access.

TRAINER AND TRAINEE RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Trainer Responsibilities

- a. The trainer shall locate the training facility, ensure that it is environmentally safe, set up the site, and prepare a training schedule for trainee.
- b. The trainer is responsible for supplying training material.
- c. The trainer shall follow the current syllabus and training manual in training all new trainees.
- d. The trainer shall be available to answer trainees questions at all times.
- e. After Phase Three training is complete, the trainer shall forward the completed module checklist to the NCDVA Training Coordinator.

2. Trainee Responsibilities

- a. The trainee and his/her supervisor shall set aside the time for training without interruptions; this time shall be coordinated by the trainee and trainer.
- b. The trainee shall be available to adhere to scheduled training times.
- c. The trainee shall complete assignments and have questions ready for trainer.

- d. The trainee shall:
 - i. Give feedback after each session,
 - ii. Complete each end of module check list,
 - iii. Ask questions,
 - iv. Be honest and open with trainer, and
 - v. Complete the course evaluation after testing.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND ONGOING TRAINING

1. Generally, the District Service Officer will visit each CVSO within his/her district at least two times per month. These visits will be coordinated with the CVSO to develop a mutually agreeable schedule.
2. During the first 12-18 months of service by a CVSO, the DSO should plan on meeting with the CVSO more frequently.
3. The DSO may, at his/her discretion, reduce the number of visits to no fewer than one time per month in the case of exceptionally experienced and capable CVSOs (generally, those with a minimum of five or more years' experience) or for CVSOs that have more than two full-time service officers and where the manager has a minimum of five years' experience.
4. The purpose of the assistance visit will vary depending on the needs and experience of the CVSO. At a minimum, the DSO should provide an overview of information and changes from the NCDVA and USDVA.
5. DSOs will conduct a minimum of two district training sessions per year for the CVSOs in the district. The content of these trainings should be coordinated with the CVSOs in the district. At least one block of training should use a CVSO as the primary trainer.

APPENDIX 1

County Veterans Service Office

Service Officer:

Business Email Address:

Title:

Date Hired:

Office Address:

Mailing Address:

(If different from location address.)

Office Telephone Number:

Office Fax Number:

Office Hours *(days and hours if, part-time)*

District #:

County:

Veteran

If Veteran, service dates:

Non Veteran

NC

City

State

Zip Code

NC

City

State

Zip Code

Asst. Service Officer:

Business Email Address:

Title:

Veteran

If Veterans, service dates:

Non Veteran

Date Hired:

Asst. Service Officer:

Business Email Address:

Title:

Veteran

If Veterans, service dates:

Non Veteran

Date Hired:

Asst. Service Officer:

Business Email Address:

Title:

Veteran

If Veterans, service dates:

Non Veteran

Date Hired:

APPENDIX 2

Module Checklist

District Number and Location: _____; or
State Service Office: _____; or
County Service Office and Location: _____

STUDENT'S TRAINING MODULE CHECKLIST					
MODULE NUMBER	MODULE NAME	START DATE	COMPLETION DATE	TRAINEE INITIALS	TRAINER'S INITIALS
1	HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION				
2	GENERAL PROVISIONS AND DEFINITIONS				
3	DUTY TO ASSIST AND CLAIM DEVELOPMENT				
4	SERVICE CONNECTION DISABILITY COMPENSATION				
5	NON-SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY PENSION				
6	DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION				
7	DEATH PENSION				
8	ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION REPORT (EVR)				
9	BURIAL BENEFITS				
10	VA MEDICAL CARE				
11	VA LOAN GUARANTY				
12	INSURANCE				
13	VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION				
14	VETERAN'S EDUCATION ASSISTANCE				
15	DEPENDENT'S EDUCATION ASSISTANCE				
16	DEBT MANAGEMENT: COMMITTEE ON WAIVERS AND COMPROMISES				
17	APPELLATE PROCESSES				
18	DISCHARGE REVIEWS; CORRECTION OF MILITARY RECORDS				
19	SPECIAL BENEFITS				
20	NORTH CAROLINA BENEFITS				
21	NATIONAL GUARD BENEFITS				
22	RETIRED MILITARY				

I certify that I have received Training on all the modules in the Veterans Service Officer Training Course.

DSO or CVSO Signature: _____

Date: _____

NCDVA Training Coordinator's Signature: _____

Date: _____

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Accreditation of Veterans Service Officers

Policy Number: 3.02

Effective Date: 01/27/2010

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Policy:

The policy of the NCDVA is to provide training to all eligible Veterans Service Officers. The Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs shall accredit those Service Officers who meet the criteria of Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 14.629 (38 CFR § 14.629) and who agree to abide by NCDVA Policies and Procedures.

Policy Statement:

GENERAL

1. Accredited Representatives are responsible for compliance with all statutory provisions and regulations pertaining to confidentiality of information. Information should be released only if authorized by the claimant, and only to the extent authorized by law and regulations for the stated purpose.
2. Accredited Representatives shall not serve as guardians or fiduciaries by any other designation, of Veterans or other individuals receiving benefits from the VA or any other agency before which the North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs represents claimants.
3. Accredited Representatives shall not accept remuneration in any form for services rendered.
4. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Form 21-22 (Appointment of Veterans Service Organization As Claimant's Representative, commonly referred to as Power of Attorney (POA), shall list "North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs (NCDVA)" in Block 3A and "Veterans Service Officer" in Block 3B.
5. Only the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs may revoke a POA. Any revocation of a POA shall be in accordance with NCDVA Policy 2.05 (Revocation of Powers of Attorney).
6. The North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs (NCDVA) shall not accept a POA from any person whose interests are detrimental or adverse to those of the Veteran. NCDVA cannot actively pursue a claim in which two or more persons are claimants for the same monetary benefit. This includes claims for apportionment by an estranged spouse.

6. Records in sufficient detail for preparation of monthly reports shall be maintained and provided to the District Service Office (DSO).
7. Veterans Service Offices shall maintain a complete and current reference library of all VA regulations and directive publications, appropriate regulatory issues of other Federal Agencies and North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs memos.
8. A 1992 General Counsel opinion (VAOPGCPREC 11-92) determined that service organization representative, agent or attorney is not authorized to sign:
 - a. An application for compensation or pension benefits, VA form 21-526.
 - b. An Eligibility Verification Report (EVR), on behalf of the claimant despite a properly executed appointment form, (Power of Attorney).

INITIAL ACCREDITATION

1. The United States Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of General Counsel (OGC) has jurisdiction to determine who may represent Veterans before the Department. The requirements are set out in The Code of Federal Regulations, Title 38, Section 14.629 (38CFR §14.629). The basic requirements are that the designee:

- a. Is of good character and reputation and has demonstrated the ability to represent claimants before the VA,
- b. Is a paid employee of the recognized State organization (NCDVA) or county, working for it not less than 1,000 hours annually,
- c. Has successfully completed a course of training and an examinations which have been approved by a Regional Counsel with jurisdiction for the State, and
- d. Will receive either regular supervision and monitoring or annual training.

2. North Carolina General Statute Chapter 165, Section 165-6(8) authorizes any county, city, town or Indian tribe to engage in Veterans service in compliance with NCDVA policies and procedures.

3. If the Service Officer obtains a passing score on the final exam, works 1000 hours or more per year in accordance with the requirements of CFR § 14.629, desires accreditation with NCDVA and agrees to act in compliance with NCDVA policies and procedures, the proctor will:

- a. Issue and review NCDVA Policy Manual. The CVSO will sign and date the acknowledgement of receipt and intent to abide by NCDVA Policies. The proctor shall mail the signed original acknowledgement to the Assistant Director.

b. Complete the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Training, Response, Involvement and Preparation of Claims (VA TRIP) training information sheet and fax to Training Coordinator for enrollment into the online VA TRIP Program.

c. Forward the test and results to the Training Coordinator. The Training Coordinator shall notify the District Service Officer and immediate supervisor in writing that the Service Officer passed the test.

d. Submit two copies of VA Form 21 (Application for Accreditation as Service Organization Representative), one listing North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs and one listing the American Legion in block 7A.

4. Upon notification that the Service Officer passed the test, works the necessary hours required by CFR § 14.629 and desires accreditation with NCDVA, the DSO shall either:

a. Submit a memo to the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs recommending accreditation or

b. Submit a memo to the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs explaining why the DSO does not recommend accreditation and recommending remedial measures to correct deficiencies.

5. If the DSO recommends accreditation, the Training Coordinator shall furnish the Assistant Director the name of trainee, employer, and date of successful completion of test in order to prepare a certification of completion.

6. After the Service Officer has received the Letter of Accreditation from OGC and has successfully completed VA TRIP training, he or she should contact the NCDVA Network Administrator to begin the application process for US DVA Virtual Private Network (VPN) computer access.

MAINTAINING ACCREDITATION

1. Veterans Service Officers who are accredited with the North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs shall complete 20 contact hours of approved continuing education and training annually to maintain accreditation.

a. NCDVA sponsored schools and documented training by designated District Service Officer may be used to satisfy this requirement.

b. Training provided by the North Carolina Association of County Veterans Service Officers or the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers may also be used to satisfy a maximum of 10 contact hours of this requirement.

- c. Training provided by other Veterans Service Organizations may be used to satisfy a maximum of 10 contact hours of required continuing education if the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs or Assistant Director of the NCDVA gives **prior approval**.
2. All accredited Veterans Service Officers shall be tested every 5 years using a US DVA approved test. The passing score shall be 80%.

WITHDRAWAL OF ACCREDITATION

1. Withdrawal of NCDVA accreditation is a serious step that will only be taken after other methods to correct deficiencies have failed.
2. When any Service Officer identifies what he or she believes are deficiencies on the part of another service officer (DSO, CVSO or SSO), the following procedures will be followed:
 - a. The observing service officer will discuss the perceived deficiencies with the deficient service officer. The observing service officer must make every effort to resolve the issues without involving other parties.
 - b. If this does not correct the deficiencies, the observing service officer will notify the Assistant Director, NCDVA. The observing service officer must provide specific issues, with examples, of sub-standard performance by the deficient service officer.
 - c. The Assistant Director will work with the observing service officer to develop a plan to address the deficiencies informally. This plan may include mentoring, one on one assistance and/or training. The Assistant Director, the observing service officer and/or NCDVA Training Officer may all be involved in improving the performance and/or technical knowledge of the service officer.
 - d. The previous steps are “informal”. If after 90 days deficient service officer has not shown improvement, the Assistant Director may authorize more formal steps.
 - e. Document the deficiencies and forward to the Assistant Director, NCDVA. In the case of a CVSO, the senior DSO responsible for that county will inform the County Manager of the concerns, the steps taken up to that point to correct deficiencies and that if the service officer in question does not conform to the standards established by NCDVA, NCDVA accreditation may be withdrawn.
 - f. Develop a formal plan of remediation. This may include mentoring, remedial training, clinical supervision of the service officer’s work, and/or the requirement that work done on behalf of Veteran claimants be counter-signed by another service officer. This plan will be time-limited, not less than 90 days and not longer than 180 days.

- i. In the case of an NCDVA service officer, the Assistant Director will counsel the service officer, explain the remediation plan and designate a supervising service officer.
 - ii. In the case of a CVSO, the senior DSO for that district or the Assistant Director will inform the County Manager of the plan and offer the County Manager the opportunity to participate in remediation efforts. The Assistant Director will designate the supervising service officer, normally the senior NCDVA DSO in that district. The County Manager will be informed of all further action, the results of remediation, any referral to a review panel, and, if such action is taken, the withdrawal of accreditation.
- g. After completion of the remediation plan, the observing service officer and the Assistant Director will evaluate the deficient service officer's progress. After consulting with the observing service officer, the Assistant Director may determine that:
 - i. the deficiencies have been corrected and close the matter;
 - ii. there has been significant improvement, however deficiencies remain and continue the remediation plan as written or modified for no more than 180 days, or
 - iii. there has not been significant improvement and that withdrawal of accreditation is appropriate and necessary.
- h. If the Assistant Director determines that there has not been sufficient improvement, he will refer the matter to the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs.
- i. Upon notification that the remediation period has not resulted in sufficient improvement, the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs will appoint and convene a review panel. The review panel will consist of one CVSO, one NCDVA DSO and one NCDVA SSO. The Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs will designate one member as the Chair of the panel. Neither the CVSO nor the DSO shall be from the same district as the service officer whose accreditation may be withdrawn or from the district of the original observing service officer. If the deficient service officer holds accreditation from another agency (Veterans service organization, National Association of County Veterans Service Officers, etc.), the senior accrediting official in North Carolina from that agency will be invited to participate in the inquiry of the review panel. Such senior accrediting official may not vote on the findings of the review panel.
- j. The deficient service officer will be informed of the scheduled meeting of the panel and be offered the opportunity to appear before it. The deficient service officer may bring a representative to speak on his/her behalf. Such representative must be either a Veterans representative accredited through the Office of the General Counsel of the USDVA or an attorney admitted to the practice of law before the several courts of the State of North Carolina.

- k. The Assistant Director and the supervising service officer shall both present the information to the service panel that they believe justifies withdrawal of NCDVA accreditation.
 - l. The service officer whose accreditation may be withdrawn will have the opportunity to respond and may respond in person, through a representative as provided in sub-paragraph j above or both.
 - m. After making such inquiries as they believe are necessary, the review panel shall meet in private. The review panel will vote in secret, and will then present the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs with their recommendation. The panel may find:
 - i. that there are not sufficient grounds to withdraw accreditation and that the matter should be closed,
 - ii. that the deficiencies are not sufficient to warrant withdrawal of accreditation, but that they pose the potential to rise to that level and further remediation should be undertaken or
 - iii. that there are sufficient grounds to warrant withdrawal of NCDVA accreditation.
 - n. The panel should present their findings to the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs no later than three business days after they have completed their inquiry.
 - o. The Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs will render a final decision within three business days of receiving the recommendation of the review panel.
 - p. The decision of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs is a final agency action.
3. Direct submissions or direct negotiations with the Department of Veterans Affairs or other agencies, by Service Offices who have not received approval in accordance with NCDVA Policy 2.02 (Direct Submissions by County Veteran Service Offices) shall be grounds for withdrawal of NCDVA accreditation.
4. The Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs may immediately withdraw accreditation of any Service Officer who disseminates confidential, protected or sensitive information about any Veteran to an unauthorized source or for an unauthorized reason.
5. Any Service Officer whose accreditation is withdrawn in accordance with paragraph 4, above, my request that the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs provisionally reinstate him.
- a. If the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs is satisfied that the Service Officer understands the rules concerning confidentiality, he may reinstate the accreditation on a provisional basis.

- b. The provisional accreditation will be in effect for twelve months.
- c. If there have been no further violations of confidentiality rules during the twelve month provisional accreditation, the Service Officer will again be fully accredited with NCDVA.
- d. If the Service Officer violates confidentiality during the twelve-month provisional accreditation period, the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs shall permanently withdraw NCDVA accreditation.

Section IV

Personnel Policies

- 4.01 Flexible Work Options
- 4.02 Supervisors BEACON Responsibilities
- 4.03 BEACON Entries by Positive Time Employees
- 4.04 Probationary Period for New Hires

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Flexible Work Options

Policy Number: 4.01

Effective Date: 07/01/2011

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Policy:

NCDVA will follow Department of Administration Policy HRM-015 (DOA HRM-15) concerning flexible options.

Policy Statement:

1. The Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs and/or the Assistant Director, NCDVA may approve flexible work options for any NCDVA office or individual employee.
2. An office manager or other site supervisor must initiate the request to the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs and/or the Assistant Director, NCDVA.
3. The requesting supervisor must provide a plan of work for the office or site that demonstrates that:
 - a. The requirements of DOA HRM-15 will be met, and
 - b. The office or site will be able to perform all duties from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, with the exception of holidays recognized by the Office of State Personnel.
4. The Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs and/or the Assistant Director, NCDVA may withdraw permission for flexible work schedules for either office/site or an individual whenever the needs of the NCDVA are not being fully met.

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Supervisors' BEACON Responsibilities

Policy Number: 4.02

Effective Date: 01/26/2012

Revised/Reviewed:

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Purpose: To establish supervisors responsibilities when approving BEACON entries for their employees.

Policy:

1. It is very important that supervisors approve BEACON entries in a timely fashion. When a supervisor does not, it can result in pay problems for the worker. There is no reason for a supervisor to cause a worker to suffer pay problems because the supervisor failed to accomplish his or her duties in a timely fashion.
2. Supervisors shall review BEACON entries for their staff no later than close of business the first duty day each week.
3. This requirement shall be included in all supervisors' Individual Work Plans and shall be included in all performance reviews.
4. Each week, the NCDVA BEACON Time Administrator will report to the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs those supervisors who have not reviewed and approved their staff BEACON entries as required.

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: BEACON Entries by Positive Time Employees

Policy Number: 4.03

Effective Date: 01/26/2012

Revised/Reviewed:

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Purpose: To establish positive time employees' responsibilities when entering time into BEACON.

Policy:

1. Positive time employees include all non-exempt employees and those exempt employees who have elected to use flex-time scheduling.
2. It is very important that positive time employees enter their time into BEACON in a timely fashion. This includes any employees who are on flex time. When a positive time employee does not, it can result in pay problems for the employee and additional work for the BEACON Time Administrator.
3. Supervisors shall ensure that positive employees (including anyone on flex time) enter time for the previous week no later than noon the first duty day of the following week.
4. This requirement shall be included in all supervisors' Individual Work Plans and shall be included in all performance reviews.
5. Each week, the NCDVA BEACON Time Administrator will report to the NCDVA Assistant Director the names of employees who have not entered their time as required.

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Probationary Period for New Hires **Policy Number: 4.04**

Effective Date: 08/01/2009

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Purpose:

Establish a Division policy regarding Probationary Period of new hires for North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs (NCDVA) Employees.

Policy Statement:

State Personnel Manual, Section 3, Page 6 dated July 1, 1996 provides, “the duration of a probationary appointment shall be not less than three or more than nine months of either full-time or part-time employment from the actual date of employment.”

The duration of all NCDVA probationary employees shall be nine months.

Section V

Miscellaneous Policies

- 5.01 Timely Submission of Reports, Bills, Requests, etc.
- 5.02 Media and Legislative Contacts
- 5.03 Pending Claims and Disclosure to the Public
- 5.04 Deadline for Submission of NC Scholarship for
Children of Wartime Veterans
- 5.05 Admission to State Veterans Homes
- 5.06 Internment in State Veterans Cemetery
- 5.07 Placement of Urns in a Columbarium
- 5.08 Placement of Objects at State Veterans Cemeteries
- 5.09 Flower Fund

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Timely Submission of Reports,
Bills, Requests, etc.

Policy Number: 5.01

Effective Date: 07/01/2011

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Purpose:

To establish a schedule for timely submission of all required reports, bills, invoices and requests.

Policy Statement:

1. District Service Offices (DSO) and the State Service Office (SSO) will submit required reports, bills, invoices and requests to arrive in the Office of the Assistant Secretary no later than the following dates:
 - a. Submit Proposed Itinerary (NCDVA-6) no later than the 2nd working day of each month.
 - b. No later than the 4th working day of each month submit:
 - i. Motor Fleet Travel Logs and
 - ii. Travel Reimbursement Requests (BD-403)
 - c. No later than the 10th day of each month submit:
 - i. DSO/CSO Activity Report (NCDVA-2) and
 - ii. Procurement Card Statements
 - d. Submit SSO Activity Report (NCDVA-34) No later than the 15th day of each month.
 - e. Submit requests for service contracts for office machines immediately upon receipt of invoice.
 - f. Submit as needed:
 - i. Requests for supplies,
 - ii. Requests for Equipment and
 - iii. Requests for Stamps.

2. All bills, invoices, receipt documents, etc., will be sent to the Office of the Assistant Secretary as soon as received. Bills and invoices should be approved for payment in the following manner:

EXAMPLE

O.K.

Name (Last name must be spelled out in full)

Date

O.K.

J. P. Doe

11/11/2011

3. All offices will adopt diary systems to ensure that deadlines are met.

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Media and Legislative Contacts

Policy Number: 5.02

Effective Date: 08/01/2006

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Purpose:

NCDVA will adhere to the provisions of Department of Administration Policy GA-023 (DOA GA-023) when dealing with members of the media. NCDVA will adhere to the provisions on Department of Administration Policy GA-030 (DOA GA-030) when dealing with legislators or legislative staff.

Policy Statement:

1. Unless referred to an NCDVA employee by the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs or the NCDVA Assistant Director, refer any media representative who contacts an NCDVA employee to the Department of Administration, Director of Communications.
2. Unless referred to an NCDVA employee by the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs or the NCDVA Assistant Director, refer any legislator or legislative staff who contacts an NCDVA employee to the Department of Administration, Legislative Liaison.

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Pending Claims and Disclosure
to the Public

Policy Number: 5.03

Effective Date: 05/06/2008

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Policy:

No NCDVA employee may discuss or disclose any information regarding a claimant's pending claim with the public.

Policy Statement:

1. No employee of the North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs shall discuss or disclose any information regarding a claimant's pending claim with the public, to include the news media, even with a proper release of information signed by the claimant authorizing this agency to disclose such information.
2. The claimant has the option to discuss his or her claim with anyone they chose, but this Agency's obligation is to the claimant and the integrity of the claim. Discussing a pending claim is not in the best interest of the claimant as it may jeopardize final adjudicative action by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
3. Each NCDVA employee shall notify the Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs or Assistant Director of NCDVA, if contacted by the news media for an interview. The employee shall provide complete details of the news media's request. See NCDVA Policy 5.02 (Media and Legislative Contacts) for further guidance.
4. Each NCDVA employee shall notify the Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs or Assistant Director of NCDVA, if contacted by a legislator or legislative staff member for information or assistance concerning a claim. The employee shall provide complete details of the legislator or legislative staff member's request. See NCDVA Policy 5.02 (Media and Legislative Contacts) for further guidance.

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Deadline for Submission of NC **Policy Number: 5.04**
Scholarship for Children of Wartime Veterans

Effective Date: 02/06/2008

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Policy:

1. Applications for award of an NC Scholarship for Children of Wartime Veterans (Class II & III) shall be submitted to the Office of the Assistant Secretary no later than close of business on the first working day of March of each year.
2. Acceptable means of submission include:
 - a. US Postal Service postmarked no later than the deadline
 - b. A designated delivery service (e.g. Federal Express, UPS, DHL) showing receipt by the delivery service no later than the deadline, or
 - c. Hand delivered to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs no later than the deadline.
3. Any other means of submission is not acceptable, to include packets faxed to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs and those date stamped as having been delivered to a County Veteran Service Office prior to the deadline.
4. The District Offices shall ensure that all supporting documentation is in the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs' Office no later than the third Thursday of March of that year. The following supporting documentation is exempt from this deadline:
 - a. Proof of graduation,
 - b. School affidavit, and
 - c. Proof that the applicant has complied with applicable requirements of the Military Selective Act.
5. The Commission meeting will be held on the third Tuesday in April of that year for the selection of Class II and III scholarships.

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Admission to State Veterans Homes

Policy Number: 5.05

Effective Date: June 1, 2011

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Purpose: To establish the policy concerning eligibility and priority for admission to North Carolina State Veterans Home.

Policy:

North Carolina General Statute §165-52 states that the Veterans Affairs Commission shall have the authority to determine administrative standards for admission and dismissal, as well as medical conditions, of all persons admitted to and dismissed from the State Veterans Nursing Home, and to issue any necessary rules, subject to the requirements set out in G.S. §165-53, Eligibility and Priorities.

Policy Statement:

The Standard Operating Procedures for Admissions into the NC State Veterans Nursing Homes is to be strictly adhered to and followed when Veterans apply for residency at the NC State Veterans Home. The information obtained must be complete and in compliance with State and Federal Law. A Veteran must meet criteria as stated in this policy to be placed in the NC State Veterans Home.

1. NCDVA GENERAL ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS: The NC State Veterans Home may refuse to place a Veteran in the NC State Veterans Home, if the Veteran fails to meet the non-medical Admission Requirements. The Admissions Director will notify the State Veterans Homes Program Manager immediately of Veteran's failure to meet admission requirements. The Admissions Director is responsible for informing the Veteran or his/her authorized representative when admission is denied. Offers of admission may only be made through the Admissions Director:

a. **General Criteria for Admission:**

- 1) The Veteran must have served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States for other than training purposes.
- 2) The Veteran must have been discharged from the Armed Forces under honorable conditions (applicant must supply DD-214 or equivalent Report of Separation from Service).
- 3) The Veteran must be a resident of North Carolina for twenty-four (24) consecutive months immediately prior to date of application.

- 4) A licensed physician must refer the Veteran.
- 5) The Veteran must be disabled by reason of age, disease, or other reasons determined through a physical examination. The medical staff will review the FL-2 and History and Physical to confirm that the NC State Veterans Home can meet the needs of the Veteran/resident.

b. Medical Criteria for Admission:

- 1) Must not be a carrier or suspected of having any infectious, communicable disease.
- 2) Must not have a condition, which in the opinion of the attending physician is such that there is a probability of their being unduly disruptive to other residents, staff or visitors, or committing physical harm to themselves or others.
- 3) Must not be chemically dependent on drugs or alcohol. If previously dependent, must have successfully completed a structured rehabilitative program prior to admission.
- 4) Must not be acutely ill or require medical, surgical, and nursing care beyond the capabilities of the facility.

c. Priorities:

1) Eligible Veterans will be admitted into a State Veterans Home or placed on a waiting list for admission into a home according to the following priorities:

(a) Eligible wartime Veterans will receive priority over eligible non-wartime Veterans and will be admitted to the first available bed capable of providing the level of care required. Eligible wartime Veterans with equal care requirements will be ranked in chronological order based on the earliest date of receipt of the Veteran's application for care.

(b) All other eligible Veterans will be ranked in chronological order based on the earliest date of receipt of the Veteran's application for care. If more than one application is received on the same date, the Veterans Service Officer/ admissions coordinator will determine their sequential order on the list according to medical need.

(c) Non-Veterans may occupy no more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the total beds in a State Veterans Home and may not be admitted unless the census is at 90% or lower. When any space is available for non-Veterans, priority will be established for the following relatives of eligible Veterans in the following order:

- (a) Spouse
- (b) Widow or widower whose spouse, if living, would be an eligible Veteran.
- (c) Gold Star parents, defined as the mother or father of a Veteran who died an honorable death while in active service to the United States during time of war or emergency.

2. MEDICAL CRITERIA DETERMINING LEVEL OF CARE:

a. Nursing Home Care:

1) Must have a current physical within thirty-days (30) of admission verifying that the individual needs assistance with most activities of daily living and has a medical and/or nursing supervision need.

2) Must have current chest x-ray within thirty-days (30) of admission verifying that the individual is free of tuberculosis (if available).

3) A Veteran who has been preliminarily qualified for admission may be required to furnish additional information including but not limited to:

- (a) Current Medical Findings - diagnosis and prognosis.
- (b) Medical Rehabilitation Goals - summary of course of treatment followed in hospital or other health care facility.
- (c) Physician orders for transferring care.

b. No more than 5% of the total capacity of each facility will be occupied by Veterans with a service connected disability rating of 70% or greater or Veterans requiring nursing home care due to a service connected disability.

3. ADMISSIONS PACKET:

a. The following items will be included in the Admission Packet:

- 1) Letter from the State Veterans Homes Program Manager
- 2) Information Sheet
- 3) List of Requirements/Documents
- 4) Brochure
- 5) NCDVA 31 - NC State Veterans Home Application (Copy maintained in resident's file.)

b. The Admissions Director maintains copies of the Admissions Packets.

c. Information and instructions to applicants to the North Carolina State Veterans Nursing Home is in compliance with Chapter §165, Article 8, General Statutes of North Carolina.

d. Request for Admission Packet/Information. A Veteran or family member may obtain a copy of the Admissions Packet/Information prior to admission by requesting information in the following manner:

1) A copy of the Admissions Packet may be obtained by visiting the NC State Veterans Home (NC State Veterans Home – Admissions Director, Veterans Service Officer, District Service Office, or County Service Office).

2) A copy of the Admission Packet may be mailed to the Veteran's home for his/her convenience (NC State Veterans Home – Admissions Director).

3) Contact the Admissions Director at each respective home for information on admissions. The Admissions Director schedules all tours.

4. COMPLETION OF APPLICATION PACKET (REQUIRED DOCUMENTS /FORMS/INFORMATION):

a. A completed application packet **does not** guarantee your acceptance and placement in the NC State Veterans Home. It is a means of determining eligibility and benefits available to you from USDVA. The admission packet can be completed at date of admission. If there is a problem completing the admission documents, contact the State Veterans Homes Program Manager immediately.

b. Assistance in Completing NCDVA/USDVA Required Documents:

1) The Veterans Service Officer within the NC State Veterans Home assists in preparing and completing the required NCDVA/USDVA forms for the Veteran's admission.

2) The Veterans Service Officer at the NC State Veterans Home may request VA benefit information on a potential resident from a District or County Veterans Service Officer.

c. The admission process is divided into NCDVA and Management Company required information. All forms, documents and information are required for the Veteran to be admitted into the NC State Veterans Home. The Veterans Service Officer will assist the Veteran in obtaining the information and/or completing the documents.

1) NCDVA Required Application Packet:

(a) Completed Form NC FL-2 (30 days current), Medicaid Program Long-Term Care Services (must be signed and dated by physician), and recent history and physical (30 days current – 2 to 3 pages) completed by physician. These forms are forwarded to the NCDVA office from the Admissions Director. (VSO forwards a copy to VAMC and State Service Office/Copy maintained in resident's file.)

(b) Completed Form NCDVA-31, Application for State Veterans Nursing Home. (VSO - copy maintained in resident's file.)

(c) Completed DVA Form 10-10EZ, Application for Medical Benefits and Financial Worksheet. (VSO forwards original to VAMC/Copy maintained in resident's file.)

(d) DOB and Parental Information. (VSO forwards original to VAMC/Copy maintained in resident's file.)

(e) Completed 21-4138 – “I wish to advise you that I am currently a nursing home patient . . . facility as provided for in P.L. 109-461, Sec 211.” (VSO forwards original to VAMC/Copy maintained in resident’s file.)

(f) Completed USDVA Release of Information. (VSO forwards original to the VAMC/Copy maintained in resident’s file.)

(g) Completed DVA Form 21-526/527, Veteran’s Application for Compensation or Pension, if applicable – Veteran. (VSO forwards original forwarded to State Service Office/Copy maintained in resident’s file.)

(h) Completed DVA Form 21-22, Appointment of Veterans Service Organization as Claimant’s Representative – Veteran. (VSO forwards original to State Service Office/Copy maintained in resident’s file.)

(i) Completed “Notice of Responsibility for Medicaid Residents Form”

2) Documents Needed To Support Application:

(a) A copy of military discharge, DD-214, or equivalent. (VSO forwards copy to State Service Office/Copy maintained in resident’s file.)

(b) Proof of Residency for past 2 years (example: voter registration, NC tax return, property tax records, NC driver’s license, employment records). (Copy maintained in resident’s file.)

(c) A copy of Legal Power of Attorney--if applicable. (May be forwarded to VAMC/Copy maintained in resident’s file.)

(d) A copy of Health Power of Attorney--if applicable. (Copy maintained in resident’s file.)

(e) A copy of Guardianship--if applicable.(Copy maintained in resident’s file.)

(f) A copy of Living Will--if applicable. (Copy maintained in resident’s file.)

(g) A copy of Court-Appointed Conservatorship-- if applicable. (Copy maintained in resident’s file.)

(h) A copy of Marriage/Death/Divorce Paperwork -- if applicable. (May be forwarded to State Service Office/Copy maintained in resident’s file.)

(i) Income Information – Bank statements, any information regarding stocks and bonds, pension, social security, information on rental property, earned interest, property taxes, etc. (if applicable). (May be forwarded to State Service Office/Copy maintained in resident’s file.)

(j) Veterans currently receiving pension/compensation – VA paperwork -- if applicable

(k) Social Security Card, Driver’s License (if applicable), Medicare Card/Medicaid Card (if applicable) and any other Health Insurance Cards (if applicable). (Copy maintained in resident’s file.). (Copy maintained in resident’s file.)

3) Contact Person, Address and Telephone Number - Contact person must have Power of Attorney (POA) or be able to make decisions on behalf of the Veteran, without recourse or confusion.

5. NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY. The Veteran or Veteran's designated contact person will be contacted by telephone by the Admissions Director at the NC State Veterans Home to notified them of the room availability.

6. ACCEPTANCE

a. After the Medical Requirements have been met, the Admissions Director will forward **FL-2, History and Physical** to the Veterans Service Officer. The Veterans Service Officer is responsible for obtaining a copy of the DD-214 and documentation of the residency requirement. If there is a problem or issue with this requirement – the State Veterans Homes Program Manager is notified immediately.

b. Upon notification of room availability by the Admissions Director, an appointment will be set-up for the Veteran to begin the admission process into the NC State Veterans Home. The admission director will notify the Veterans Service Officer of the appointment; however, the Veterans Service Officer is responsible for re-scheduling an appointment if they are not available during the initial application admission process.

c. Veteran and/or family member will meet with the Veterans Service Officer (NCDVA) at the NC State Nursing Home, hospital or residence to ensure all State/Federal required forms and documents are completed.

7. PRIVATE ROOMS. The priority for private room assignment is as follows:

- a. Priority 1 – residents with contagious or infectious disease;
- b. Priority 2 – residents on oxygen or who are terminally ill;
- c. Priority 3 – Female residents if the following conditions apply:
 - 1) Private room is available
 - 2) Female is #1 on the waiting list and
 - 3) Conditions in the State Veterans Home would preclude admittance of the female without a private room;
- d. Priority 4 – Other residents who request a private room will be assigned one on a first come-first served basis. There may be an additional charge for a private room assigned to Priority 4 residents.
- e. Private room occupants in priority 1, 2, and/or 3 will vacate the private room when the condition(s) and/or situations are resolved. Private room occupants from priority 4 will be required to vacate the private room for priority 1, 2, and 3, residents on a last in first out basis. In this case the resident's name will be placed back at the top of the priority 4 waiting list.

8. CIVIL RIGHTS ACT: Homes will be operated in full compliance with the Civil Rights Act without discrimination as to race, color, creed or religion.

9.

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Internment in a State Veterans Cemetery

Policy Number: 5.06

Effective Date: July 1, 2011

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Purpose:

To establish a North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs (NCDVA) State Veterans Cemetery general internment policy.

Policy Statement:

1. Eligibility Requirements: The following persons are eligible for internment at a North Carolina State Veterans Cemetery:
 - a. Any former member of the US Armed Forces whose service on activity duty, other than active duty for training, and was terminated under honorable conditions.
 - b. A Veteran who is entitled to retired pay for non-regular service (i.e. service in the Reserve Components or Army or Air National Guard) or a Veteran who would have been entitled to retired pay for non-regular service, but for the fact that the person was under 60 years of age.
 - c. Those Veterans who are legal residents of North Carolina;
 - i. At time of death; or
 - ii. For a period of at least 10 years; or
 - iii. At the time of entry into the Armed Forces of the United States are eligible for internment
 - d. The spouse, widow or widower of a qualified Veteran, or a minor child who is unmarried and dependent on the qualified Veteran at the time of death. For purposes of definition, a "minor child" includes a child under 21 years of age or under 23 years of age if pursuing a course of instruction at an educational institution approved by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. In addition, an unmarried adult child of a qualified Veteran who has become permanently incapable of self-support because of a physical or mental disability prior to attaining the age of 18 years is also eligible.

2. Proof of Eligibility: Documentary evidence is required to provide proof and substantiate claim of military service, residence, marriage, children as well as dependent disability. It is the responsibility of the Veteran, his/her survivors or legal representative to furnish any evidence necessary to establish the eligibility of the Veteran or the family member before internment in a North Carolina State Veterans Cemetery will be approved.

- a. Proof of Honorable Military Service:

- i. The primary document used to verify honorable military service is the DD Form 214 or an equivalent.
- ii. Veterans who are unable to find their DD Form 214 should contact the local Veterans Service Office for assistance in obtaining a replacement copy.
- iii. Veterans claiming eligibility through service in the Reserve Components or National Guard must present a “20 year letter” or proof of eligibility to receive retired pay or proof of receiving retired pay.

- b. Proof of Residency: If the Veteran cannot provide proof of entry into service from North Carolina, two documents of proof are required to establish residency. Preferred documents are NC Voter Registration, NC State Personal Income Tax, NC State Property Tax, W2 Form showing NC Income Tax paid or Deed of Trust to a home located in North Carolina. Other documents that can be considered are school records, bank records, mortgages, or official records from state or municipal agencies. The NC Driver’s License cannot be accepted as proof of residency.

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3. Dependent(s): The primary document for verification of a spouse is a marriage certificate. Dependent children may be verified by a birth certificate or other legal documents such as adoption papers. For an adult dependent, a letter is required from the dependent’s physician certifying the dependent became permanently incapable of self-support because of a physical or mental disability before attaining the age of 18 years.

4. Internment in the State Veterans Cemetery shall be in plots or niches in sequential order by plot or niche number. Burial plots and columbarium niches cannot be reserved in advance, with one exception: if both husband and wife are eligible Veterans, the surviving spouse can reserve an adjacent plot next to the interred spouse, as both are independently eligible for Veteran’s burial benefits. Family members or next-of-kin cannot select specific plots or niches at the time of interment.

5. Burial Plots:

- a. Burial plots in the State Veterans Cemetery shall be 7 feet long by 3 ½ feet wide by 5 feet deep for a single casket internment. In the situation where the Veteran and spouse are to be interred together, the burial plot shall be 7 feet long by 3 ½ feet wide by 7 ½ feet deep.

- b. Two (2) adult-sized caskets along with 2 cremains are the maximum allowable in any one burial plot.
 - c. The two (2) adult-sized caskets shall be stacked in one burial plot.
 - d. Burial of cremains shall be in a full-sized burial plot. Cremains shall not be scattered on the State Veterans Cemetery grounds.
 - e. No plot or columbarium niche shall be reduced in dimension to accommodate only a headstone to mark a grave where remains were not interred. Example: Cremains scattered elsewhere but the next-of-kin applied for a headstone; or, a marker to memorialize a Veteran who is listed as missing-in-action and whose remains were never recovered.
6. There is no charge for burial of a qualified Veteran at any State Veterans Cemetery. There is however, a burial fee for the interment of a spouse or qualified dependent. This fee shall be established by the North Carolina Veterans Affairs Commission.
7. A Concrete vault or liner is required for a casket burial. Payment for the vault or liner is the responsibility of the Veteran or his family. No vault or liner is required for a cremation.
8. All Funeral expenses are the responsibility of the Veteran, family or estate. The State Veterans Cemetery provides a burial plot, opening and closing of the grave, grave marker and installation, and perpetual care at no cost to the Veteran or Veteran's family.
9. There are no graveside services. Instead, services are held at a committal shelter or chapel on-site in the State Veterans Cemetery.
10. Caskets may not be opened for viewing at the State Veterans Cemetery. Viewing must be done at the funeral home or locations other than the State Veterans Cemetery.

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Placement of Urns in a Columbarium **Policy Number: 5.07**

Effective Date: July 1, 2011

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Purpose:

To set forth State Veterans Cemetery policy regarding placement of Urns in a Columbarium Wall.

Policy Statement:

1. Size limitations for urns will apply as follows:
 - a. Height of not more than thirteen (13) inches
 - b. Width of not more than nine (9) inches
 - c. Depth of not more than eight (8) inches
2. For cylinder shaped urns; the diameter cannot exceed nine (9) inches.
3. Niche covers for the columbarium will be processed in the same manner as regular headstones. However, the information placed on the niche covers will be limited, primarily because of the cover size.

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Placement of Objects at State Veterans Cemeteries

Policy Number: 5.08

Effective Date: July 1, 2011

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Purpose:

To establish a North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs (NCDVA) State Veterans Cemetery policy regarding placement of floral arrangements and other objects on graves and other grounds within the State Cemetery.

Policy Statement:

1. Floral arrangements accompanying the casket or urn at the time of burial will be placed on the completed grave. Natural cut flowers may be placed on graves at any time of the year. They will be removed when they become unsightly or when it becomes necessary to facilitate cemetery operations such as mowing.
2. Artificial flowers and potted plants will be permitted on graves during the period of October 10 through April 15, and 10 days before through 10 days after Easter Sunday and Memorial Day.
3. Christmas wreaths, grave blankets and other seasonal adornments may be placed on graves from December 1 through January 20. They shall not be secured to headstones or markers.
4. Wreaths, and/or floral arrangements are permitted on the anniversary date of the Veteran's death.
5. Flags shall be placed on each grave by cemetery personnel and Veterans organizations only for the Memorial Day observance. The flags will be removed at the end of the week. Any flag found on a grave other than the Memorial Day observance will be removed.
6. Permanent plantings, statues, memorial benches, vigil lights, breakable objects and similar items are not permitted. Benches placed by private parties prior to February 1, 2012 may remain as long as they are structurally sound.
7. Major units (those under command of a Flag Officer of at least two-star rank) may apply to the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs for permission to place a unit memorial at

one of the State Veterans Cemeteries. With the consent of the Veterans Affairs Commission, the Assistant Secretary may approve such memorial.

8. The NCDVA does not permit adornments that are considered offensive, inconsistent with the dignity of the cemetery or considered hazardous to cemetery personnel. For example, items incorporating beads or wires may become entangled in mowers or other equipment and cause injury.
9. Permanent items removed from graves will be placed in an inconspicuous holding area for one month prior to disposal. Decorative items removed from graves remain the property of the donor but are under the custodianship of the cemetery. If not retrieved by the donor, they are then governed by the rules for disposal of State property.

North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Policy

Subject: Flower Fund

Policy Number: 5.09

Effective Date: 07/01/2011

Revised/Reviewed: 2/1/2012

Approved By: Timothy E. Wipperman, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Purpose: To establish the policy concerning establishment and control of an NCDVA Flower Fund.

Policy:

Employees of NCDVA may establish a flower fund for the purpose of demonstrating the concern of fellow employees upon the death of an employee, his or her spouse, children and parents.

Policy Statement:

The purpose of the Flower Fund is to show the concern of fellow employees during a time of great stress by one of our own. This fund will cover only the death of an employee, his or her spouse, children and parents. Office heads are responsible for notifying the Office of the Assistant Secretary when a death occurs.

The Assistant Director shall oversee the establishment and maintenance of a flower fund.